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How to Get USDA Approval of Equipment, Facilities, Chemical Compounds, and Packaging for Meat and Poultry Products

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) is responsible for assuring the safety and wholesomeness of meat and poultry. The agency carries out the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act. As part of this responsibility, FSQS must make certain these products are produced in a sanitary environment and that chemicals or packaging used in plants do not result in adulterated or mislabeled product. Therefore, FSQS reviews and approves all facility plans, equipment, chemical compounds, and packaging materials used in slaughtering and processing of meat and poultry products.

Facilities and Equipment

Operators of meat and poultry plants are required to submit plans for facilities and equipment for advance approval. FSQS officials take into consideration the scope and nature of each plant's operations--whether large or small--before they approve building plans for new or existing facilities.

Detailed information concerning the construction and layout of meat and poultry plants can be found in Agriculture Handbook No. 570, "U.S. Inspected Meatpacking Plants: A Guide to Construction, Equipment, Layout."

In addition, USDA publication MPI-2, "Accepted Meat and Poultry Equipment," provides guidelines for plant operators wanting to install new equipment or make changes to existing equipment. Three issues are published each year and are available individually or by subscription.

The publications are useful for meat and poultry plant operators as well as equipment manufacturers. They provide details on how to submit specifications and drawings for facilities and equipment as well as information for manufacturers who design or modify equipment for meat and poultry plants.

The publications can be ordered in bulk from the Government Printing Office (see address on reverse side). For single copies or for answers to specific questions on facilities or equipment, write to:

Facilities, Equipment and Sanitation
Division
Technical Services, MPI, FSQS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 447-5627

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Chemical Compounds and Packaging and Other Materials

Meat and poultry processors may use only USDA-approved chemicals and materials in the processing of their products or for pest control, sanitation, or other procedures performed in the plant. Approved chemicals are listed in the USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 1373, "List of Chemical Compounds." The list is revised annually, and a supplement is issued every half year. The list and the supplement are available from the Superintendent of Documents (see address below).

Manufacturers wishing to have their products approved by USDA must submit detailed information including the name of the product, its chemical composition, and its intended use. Complete instructions are provided in "Guidelines for Obtaining Authorization of Compounds to Be Used in Meat and Poultry Plants," which is available from the Food Ingredient Assessment Division (see address below).

FSQS staff also evaluates the safety of packaging materials for meat or poultry although there is no requirement for industry to obtain prior approval. Because inspectors have the responsibility to accept or require evaluation of packaging materials, FSQS evaluates such materials as a service before their introduction to the plant. A letter from the Food Ingredient Assessment Division showing product acceptability can avoid inspection delays.

For further information on how to get chemical compounds or packaging materials approved or evaluated, write to:

Director, Food Ingredient Assessment
Division
Science, FSQS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 447-7680

To order publications write to the:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

If you wish to be notified when new editions and supplements to these publications are issued, write to the following address and ask to be put on mailing key N-504:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Attention: Mail List, Stop SSOM
Washington, DC 20401